ANATOMY IS DESTINY

. . . in every society women bear and raise children and that woman’s socially and culturally defined role as mother provides the basis for subordination. . . .


God had created woman as man’s equal, not as his dependent. There is the assertion of the equality of the sexes. In fact, in 1848, the convention at Seneca Falls opened its Declaration of sentiments with the assertion that “we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal” [Kraditor, Quoted in Christie Farnham, The Impact of Research in the Academy, 1987, p. 3]. The American Constitution upholds this in its Preamble stating that all men are born equal, which includes also women. Therefore, Angelina Grimke argues pointedly thus [Quoted in Christie Farnham, The Impact of Research in the Academy, 1987, p. 3]:

Whatever is morally right for a man to do, it is morally right for a woman to do. . . .

Not with standing these arguments, the male domineeringly maintains and sticks to the popular doctrine of separate spheres. Man’s contention is that man’s appropriate sphere is the world, where he rules by law, and that the woman’s sphere is the home, where she reigns by persuasion.
A woman is thought to be inherently nurturing, morally superior to man, self-sacrificing, self-abnegating, submissive, pure, and pious. If she were not these she is no woman. Indeed, her contemporaries unsex her. The rationalization of the society is based on the argument that men and women are treated differently because they are inherently different. Christie Farnham makes a pointed observation, which is worth recording here, for it argues to the point [Christie Farnham, *The Impact of Research in the Academy*, 1987, p. 5]:

There is no equality [of sexes] if the standards of the dominant class [male chauvinists] are the only ones applied and the positive attributes of the victims [women] are ignored. Yet, the celebration of the difference increases women’s vulnerability to oppression by providing for its rationalization, even as the insistence upon equality obscures what has been forged in the crucible of adversity. . . .

And the fact remains that a woman is thought as the provider of pleasure, care, comfort, and is generally responsible for feeding their husbands and children. Traditional gender ideology demarcates traits along a line of dependency.

The woman suffers and experiences oppression, because she finds that her *anatomy is her destiny* and that she can never escape from this inevitable biological trap in which she is caught. Simon de Beauvoir makes a pointed observation, which is worth recording here, for it argues to the point [Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 1953, p. xviii]

Thus humanity is male and man defines women not in herself but as
relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. . . She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - - she is the Other [Italics Mine]. . .

The assumption that persists is that women are fundamentally different from men and this has been the cause of the subordination of women. It is argued, then, that women’s differences from men, is the chief reason of women being oppressed, denied, exploited and dehumanized.

It ought to be stressed that the fundamental fact of male domination over women is discernible in all societies. Patriarchy is justified by the biological differences between men and women and is the causative factor of the universal oppression of women by men.

Tracing the major attributes of patriarchy Adrienne Rich writes [Of Mother Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution, 1976, p. 57]:

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers, a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men - - by force direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. . . . Under patriarchy, I may live in purdah or drive a truck *. . . .

Only with the approval of the male and to the extent patriarchy is willing to
accede, a woman can enjoy anything of privilege or influence. This has led to the pessimistic depiction of women as the innocent, passive, and powerless victims of male violence. Kate Millet’s argument [Sexual Politics, 1971, p. 25] is to the point and it is worth quoting here:

The social control of women in a free society such as the United States was not carried out through a rigid authoritarian system of force. Rather, it took place by means of the engineering of consent among women themselves. Instead of being openly coerced into accepting their secondary status, women were conditioned into embracing it by the process of sex-role stereotyping. . . . From early childhood, women were trained to accept a system which divided society into male and female spheres, with appropriate roles for each, and which allocated public power exclusively to the male sphere. . . .

At this point it becomes necessary to examine the differences that result in the biological trap in which a woman is entrapped. In the sexual act there is the animal like lack of self-restraint on the part of the male partner and there is the servility and larval vulnerability on the part of the female partner. Consequentially the male partner vicariously experiences sense of power. At the fundamental level of copulation there is assertion and dominance of the male and the feeble servility of the female. This is the biological conditioning for the female from time immemorial. Because of the body condition the male ego triumphs over the female ego. The male gloats over remarking that the female has a small juicy cunt, which fits him like a glove.
There is always the tendency to hurt and insult the female because of the biological inferiority. The history of patriarchy presents a variety of cruelties and barbarities: the suttee executions in India, the crippling deformity of foot binding in China, the lifelong ignominy of the veil in Islam, or the wide spread persecution of sequestration, the gynaecium, and purdah. Phenomenon such as clitoridectomy, clitoral incision, the sale and enslavement of women under one guise or another, involuntary and child marriages, concubinage and prostitution still take place - - the first in Africa, the latter in the Near and Far East, the last generally.

The patriarchal mentality has concocted a whole series of rationales about women to justify their acts against women. It is argued that the woman’s biological condition and the biological inferiority of woman sets her apart. The notion is that the female is essentially inferior. And as the human institutions grow out from deep and primal anxieties and are shaped by psychological mechanisms socially organized attitudes toward woman arise from basic tensions expressed by the male. Kate Millet offers a pointed observation [Sexual Politics, 1971, p. 46], which is worth recording here:

Under patriarchy the female did not herself develop the symbols by which she is described. As both the primitive and the civilized worlds are male worlds, the ideas, which shaped culture in regard to the female were also of male design. The images of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. These needs spring from a fear of the “otherness” of women. Yet this notion itself presupposes that patriarchy has already been established and the
male has already set himself as the human norm, the subject and referent to which the female is the “other” or alien. Whatever its origin, the function of the male’s sexual antipathy is to provide a means of control over a subordinate group and a rationale which justifies the inferior station of those in a lower order, “explaining” the oppression of their lives. . .

There is the persistent and worldwide feeling that the biological and sexual functions of the woman are impure. One detects evidence of the biological condition of the female being considered impure in literature, and in myth. The vent of menstruation, for instance, is a largely clandestine affair, and the psychological effect of the stigma attached has a great effect on the female ego. There is a large anthropological literature on menstrual taboo; the practice of isolating menstruating females in huts at the edge of the village occurs throughout the primitive world. Contemporary slang denominates menstruation as the curse. On this point, once again, it is quite relevant to quote Kate Millet [Sexual Politics, 1971, p. 46], is worth quoting here:

There is considerable evidence that such discomfort as women suffer during this period [period of menstruation] is often likely to be psychosomatic, rather than physiological, cultural rather than biological, in origin. That this also may be true to some extent of labour and delivery is attested to be less childbirth”. Patriarchal circumstances and beliefs seem to have the effect of poisoning the
female’s own sense of physical self until it often truly becomes the burden it is said to be. . . .

It ought to be stressed, that in the primitive period the phenomenon of the female’s genitals was explained in terms of a wound, sometimes reasoning that she was visited by a bird or snake, and mutilated into her present condition. Once she was wounded, now she bleeds. The female vagina is described in contemporary slang as a gash. The Freudian description of the female genitals is in terms of a castrated condition.

The uneasiness and disgust that the female genitals arouse in patriarchal societies is attested through religious, cultural, and literary prescription. In preliterate groups fear is also a factor, as in the belief in a castrating vagina dentata. The penis is the badge of male’s superior status, and the biological condition of the female leaves her with inferiority status and inferiority complex.

It ought to be noted that in all patriarchal societies the dominant male eats first or eats better food, and even where the male and female eat together, the female serves the male. All patriarchs enforce taboos against women touching ritual objects [those of war or religion] or food. It is because women are considered by their biological condition unclean. Therefore, the women are not permitted to eat with men. Women eat apart in many countries even at this point of time.

Moreover, all patriarchs have hedged virginity and defloration in elaborate rites and interdictions. Virginity presents an interesting problem in ambience. On the one hand, it is a mysterious good because it is sign of property received intact. On the
other hand it represents an unknown evil associated with the man of blood and terrifyingly “other”. Ernest Crawley makes a pertinent observation [The Mystic Rose, 1927, p. 29], which is worth quoting here:

So auspicious is the event of defloration that in many tribes the owner-groom is willing to relinquish breaking the seal of his new possession to a stronger or older personality who can neutralize the attendant dangers. Fears of defloration appear to originate in a fear of the alien sexuality of the female. . . .

It is the female who endures the attendant bodily pains and mental anguish in defloration. It ought to be noted that in the houses of men, boys have such low status that they are often called the wives of their initiators, the term wife implying both inferiority and the status of sexual object. The derogation of feminine status in lesser males is a patriarchal trait. The psychoanalytic term for the generalized adolescent tone of the house culture of men is the phallic state. Men consider themselves as the citadels of virility.

Therefore, men enforce the most saliently power-centred characteristics of patriarchy. Geza Roheim argues pointedly thus, and it is worth quoting here [“Psychoanalysis of Primitive Cultural Types”, 1932, p. 39]:

The tone and ethos of men’s house culture is sadistic, power-oriented, and latently homosexual, frequently narcissistic in its energy and motives. The men’s house reference that the penis is a weapon, endlessly equated with other weapons, is also clear. . . .
At this point of discussion, it is necessary to refer to the two leading myths of Western culture. They are the classical tale of Pandora’s Box and the Biblical story of the Fall. In both cases earlier man’s concepts of feminine evil have passed through a final literary phase to become highly influential ethical justifications of things as they are. Pandora was the origin of the damnable race of women - -- a plague which men must live with. And when patriarchy wishes to exalt sexuality, it celebrates fertility through the phallus; when it wishes to denigrate sexuality it cites Pandora. Kate Millet’s observation throws more light on the stance [Sexual Politics, 1971, pp. 51-52], which is worth recording here:

Patriarchal religion and ethics tend to lump the female and sex together as if the whole burden of the onus and stigma it attaches to sex were the fault of the female alone. Thereby sex, which is known to be unclean, sinful, and the debilitating, pertains to the female, and the male identity is preserved as a human, rather than a sexual one. . . .

The myth of the Fall is a highly finished version of the same theme of the female being biologically unclean and sinful. It has an enormous power over the mind of the female even in a rationalist era. This mythic version of the female as the cause of human suffering, knowledge, and sin is still the foundation of sexual attitudes, for it represents the most crucial argument of the patriarchal tradition of the West. It ought to be stressed that everywhere in The Bible “knowing” is synonymous with sexuality, and clearly a product of contact with the phallus. Incidentally, in this regard, the assertion of Gineete Castro is worth studying [Gineete Castro, American Feminism: A Contemporary History, 1990, p. 27]:

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the sexual relationship is not conceived simply as the balance of forces of two individual personalities, but as the annihilation and dehumanization of one sex - - by the other, the dominant sex [the male]. . . .

The other argument is that of Caroline Bird. It is a valid statement and it reads well in conjunction with the pointed observation of Gineete Castro, and it runs thus [Caroline Bird, Quoted in Gineete Castro, American Feminism: A Contemporary History, 1990, p. 507]:

The problem is that sexual relationship is soured and dehumanized by the workday relationships of men and women in society. Its converse is the equally obsolete image of virility - - MASCHISMO - - which enjoins men to dominance. . . .

To blame the evils and sorrows of life on the female is in vogue from times past to times present. Therefore, it is the female who is tempted first and beguiled by the penis, transformed into something else, a snake. Once again, it is useful to quote Kate Millet’s enlightening observation [Sexual Politics, 1971, pp. 53-54], which is worth recording here:

Eve is a mere sexual type and, according to tradition, either expendable or replaceable. And as the myth records the original sexual adventure, Adam was seduced by woman, who was seduced by a penis. “The woman whom thou gave to be with me, she gave me of the fruit and I
did eat it” is the first man’s defence. Seduced by the phallic snake, Eve is convicted for Adam’s participation in sex. . . .

And the pointed argument of Louis Wirth [“Problems of Minority groups”, 1945, p. 345] reads well in conjunction with the observation of Kate Millet and it runs thus:

As women in patriarchy are for the most part marginal citizens when they are citizens at all, their situation is like that of other minorities, here defined not as dependent upon numerical size of the group, but on its status. A minority group of people who because of their physical or cultural characteristics are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment. . . .

But then, interestingly Freud pays chivalrous compliment to the female arguing that the woman is the most beautiful thing that the world can offer. And the woman is the ideal of womanhood. And nature has determined woman’s destiny through beauty, charm, and sweetness. It is an acknowledged fact that women submitted willingly to the sexual and social subjection of pairing and then to monogamous marriage because, in fact, women find sexuality burdensome.

The women constantly longed for relief by the right of chastity. The notion of sexual resistance, the defence of integrity with frigidity, or the preservation of independence through chastity is a common theme in a male dominated society. Chastity, or even the negative attitudes toward coitus, which accompany frigidity, operated as patriarchal social and psychological stratagems to limit or prohibit
woman’s pleasure in sexuality. But then they could also be transformed into protective feminine stratagems in a refusal to capitulate to patriarchal force - - physical, economic, or social.

It ought to be stressed that a frigid woman is not incapable of orgasms on her own. In fact, biologically, the female cycle is capable of multiple orgasms in quick succession, each of which is analogous to the detumescence, ejaculation, and loss of erection in the male. With proper stimulation, a woman is capable of multiple orgasms in quick succession. W. H. Masters and Virginia Johnson make an elaborate record of the possibility of multiple female orgasms [“Orgasm, Anatomy of the Female,” 1961, p. 292] is worth recording here:

> If a female who is capable of having regular orgasms is properly stimulated within a short period after her first climax, she will, in most instances, be capable of having a second, third, fourth and even a fifth and sixth orgasm before she is fully satisfied. As contrasted with the male’s usual inability to have more than one orgasm in a short period, many females, especially when clitorally stimulated, can regularly have five or six full orgasms within a matter of minutes [My Emphasis]. . . .

While the male’s sexual potential is limited, the female’s sexual potential by her biological condition is nearly inexhaustible and apart from psychological considerations can continue until physical exhaustion interposes. In view of the long-standing belief in the existence of a vaginal orgasm, it ought to be emphasized, that the clitoris is the organ specific to sexuality in the human female. And the vagina is an
organ of reproduction as well as of sexuality, and possessing no erogenous tissue save in the lower third of the vaginal tract, the nerve endings in these cells are deriving from and centring in the clitoris.

While there is no vaginal orgasm, per se, there is, of course, orgasm in vaginal coitus (and probably one of a different experiential character than that produced by exclusively clitoral stimulation) just as on any occasion when the clitoris is properly stimulated. In heterosexual intercourse female orgasm is due to the friction of the penis upon the clitoral head or glands and labia minora of the clitoral area.

A distinction must be made between the locus of arousal and the locus of response. The seat of response is in the clitoris, which triggers other responses (the enlargement of the labia majora, the flow of the transude, vaginal spasms, etceteras). Sexual arousal has its source in the stimulation of body tissues, erogenous or otherwise, or in a purely physical excitation (thoughts, emotions, words, pictures, etceteras). The clitoris, one might point out, is the only human organ, which is specific to sexuality, and to sexual pleasure while the penis has other functions both in elimination and reproduction. In this context, the pointed observation of W. H. Masters [Quoted in Dr. Sherfey’s “The Evolution and Nature of Female Sexuality in Relation to Psychoanalytic Theory,” 1966, p. 792] is worth recording here:

The average female with optimal arousal will usually be satisfied with three to five manually induced orgasms; whereas mechanical stimulation, as with the electric vibrator, is less tiring and induces her to go on to long stimulative sessions of an hour or more during which
she may have twenty to fifty consecutive orgasms. She will stop only when totally exhausted. . .

The pointed observation of Dr. Sherfey [“The Evolution and Nature of Female Sexuality in Relation to Psychoanalytic Theory,” 1966, p. 792] is worth examining in conjunction with the statement of W. H. Masters. The precise reasons are that both the arguments re poignant and to the point, and they run on parallel metal wavelengths:

No doubt the most far reaching hypothesis extrapolated from these biological data is the existence of a universal and physically normal condition of woman’s inability to ever reach complete sexual satiation in the presence of the most intense, repetitive orgasmic experience, no matter how produced. Theoretically, a woman could go on having orgasms indefinitely if physical exhaustion did not intervene. . . .

Despite an enormous biological orgasmic capacity, exhaustion can and does intervene in strict accordance with the amount of tension and energy expended; greater in the case of penis’s friction in coitus; lesser in the case of manual or mechanical stimulation. In that sense, in female, like that of in male, sexuality is limited. Incidentally, the pointed observation of Gineete Castro is worth quoting here, for it argues to the point and it reads thus [Gineete Castro, American Feminism: A Contemporary History, 1990, p. 24]:

The need for a feminist position on sexuality arose very early because of the importance given to it by the post-Freudians and the antifeminism of their theories. Two orientations towards sexuality
developed. One focused on denouncing the repression of women’s sexual needs, claiming sexual oppression through disregard for the clitoris.

The renewed value given to the clitoris led feminists to demand liberation in terms of sexual behaviour and to affirm the clitoral orgasm as enabling women (like men) to experience sexuality independently of its reproductive function, making reproduction a matter of free choice. The other orientation towards sexuality emphasized the way women had been alienated from themselves by the feminine mystique, which was viewed as psychological manipulation on a grand scale.

Moreover, biological capacity is never a psychological need. Neither does it always correspond to psychic satisfaction. The effect of patriarchal social conditions upon women with regard to their sexual lives has had enormous and even anomalous results. One marvels at the proof of the power of socialization to culturally restrain women in all respects.

Patriarchy tends to convert woman into a sexual object. But she does not enjoy sexuality, which is agreed to be her fate. Instead, she is made to suffer for and be ashamed of her sexuality. Women have been confined to the cultural level of animal life providing the male with sexual outlet and exercising the animal functions of reproduction and care of the young.
Thus, the female has had sexuality visited upon her as a punishment in a way of life, which with few exceptions, and apart from maternity, did not encourage her to derive pleasure in sexuality and limited her to an existence otherwise comprised mainly of menial labour and domestic service. By and large, pregnancy and childbirth were continually referred to, in the patriarchal set up, as biological infirmities. The entire burden of childcare and housework was left upon women, frequently alone, as paternal responsibility was so often neglected.

At this juncture the influence of Freud on the male psyche concerning woman deserves to be examined analytically, and at great length. In America the influence of Freud is incalculable. America in many ways is the first centre of sexual revolution. The male world relies on Freud for their assumptions and presumptions of the biological condition of woman. Analyzing the effect of Freud’s work on the relationship between sexes Kate Millet writes [*Sexual Politics*, 1971, p. 178]:

> Although generally accepted as a prototype of the liberal urge toward sexual freedom, and a signal contributor toward softening puritanical inhibitions upon sexuality, the effect of Freud’s work, that of his followers, and still more that of his popularisers, was to rationalize the invidious relationship between the sexes, to ratify traditional roles, and to validate temperamental differences. . . .

The argument of Viola Klein is so very pertinent and it reads well in conjunction with the observation of Kate Millet, and it is worth quoting here [*The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology*, 1946, p. 72]:

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It was expressed in inferiority feelings, in contempt for their own sex, in revolt against their passive role, in envy of man’s greater freedom, in the ambition to equal man in intellectual or artistic achievements, in strivings for independence . . . and in all sorts of devices to make up for the social disadvantages of not being a man . . .

Through his clinical work Freud was able to observe women suffering from two causes: sexual inhibition (sometimes sufficiently great as to bring on severe symptoms, even hysteria), and a great discontentment with their social circumstances. In general, Freud’s tendency was to believe the second over dependent upon the first, and to recommend on female sexual fulfilment a panacea for what were substantial symptoms of social unrest within an oppressive culture. Incidentally, the pointed observation of Shulamith Firestone is worth mentioning here for it throws much light of the oppressive culture propagated and practiced by the dominant male, and it reads thus [Shulamith Firestone, Quoted in Gineete Castro, American Feminism: A Contemporary History, 1990, p. 37]:

. . . the crucial factor is sexual, specifically, the difference between the reproductive function of the two sexes, which caused the first division of labour.

Firestone proposes a scheme of history divided into three phases, all meshing to form our current reality: the dialectic of sex, based on the biological division, which has never ceased to cause psychosexual distortions in human beings, the dialectic of class, based on the division of labour, and finally the dialectic of culture, opposing the
aesthetic (female) mode to the technical (male) mode. . . . Gradually, 
women as a defined class fell under the domination of a quadruple 
subjestion imposed by a male ruling caste: sexism, racism, capitalism, 
and technocracy. . . .

Freud did not accept the female patients’ symptoms as evidence of a justified 
dissatisfaction with the limiting circumstances imposed on the women by society, but 
as symptomatic of an independent and universal feminine tendency. Freud named this 
tendency penis envy, traced its origin to childhood experience and based his theory of 
the psychology of women upon it, aligning what he took to be three corollaries of 
feminine psychology, passivity, masochism, and narcissism, so that each was 
dependent upon, or related to, penis envy. As the Freudian understanding of female 
personality is based upon the idea of penis envy, it requires an elaborate, and often 
repetitious, exposition. Beginning with the theory of penis envy, the definition of the 
female is negative - - what she is, is the result of the fact that she is not a male and 
lacks a penis.

Freud argued that the female’s discovery of her sex - - born female - - is, in 
and of itself, a catastrophe of such vast proportions that it haunts a woman all through 
life and accounts for most aspects of her temperament. Freud believed that women 
accepted the idea that to be born female is to be born castrated. Freud’s argument, in 
this context [“Some Character Types Met With in Psycho-Analysis Work,” 1959, p. 
323] is worth quoting here:

As we learn from psycho-analytic work, women regard themselves 
as wronged from infancy, as undeservedly cut short and set back; and
the embitterment of so many daughters against their mothers derives, in the last analysis, from the reproach against her having brought them into the world as women instead of as men.

Freud located the literal feminine castration in the female child’s discovery of the anatomical differentiation between the sexes. Freud believed he found the key to feminine experience - - in that moment when girls discover they are castrated - - a momentous discovery which little girls are destined to make.

Once again, Freud’s argument, in this context [“Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinctions Between the Sexes,” 1925, p. 190] is quite relevant here:

They [the girls] notice the penis of a bother or a playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognize it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis.

But one fails not to detect in the notion of Freud concerning penis or female castration complex a strong masculine bias or even rather of a gross male-supremacist bias. Deutch refers to the clitoris as the inadequate substitute. Karl Abraham [“Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex,” 1922, p. 45] refers to the poverty in external genitals in the female and concludes that even bearing children can be but a poor substitute for biological and constitutional inadequacy.
In this context, it ought to be stressed that Freud’s attitude here is phallus-centred. As such, the postulation is that females are but incomplete or imperfect males with the male being accepted as the norm and the female as the other.

Incidentally, the first things all children notice is that the mother has breasts while father has none. What is possibly the rather impressive effect of childbirth on young minds cannot be overlooked as well as the girl’s knowledge not only of her clitoris but her vagina as well. For while the discovery of her castration is purported to be a universal experience in the female, her response to this fate is the criterion by which her health, her maturity and her future are determined through a rather elaborate series of stages. Freud’s further elaboration on this point is quite relevant here [“Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinctions Between the Sexes,” 1925, p. 192]:

After a woman has become aware of the wound to her narcissism, she develops like a scar, a sense of inferiority. When she has passed beyond her first attempt at explaining her lack of a penis as being a punishment personal to herself and has realized that sexual character is a universal one, she begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex, which is the lesser in so important a respect. The female first blames her mother who sent her into the world so insufficiently equipped, and who is always held responsible for her lack of a penis...

On this argument of Freud, Kate Millet offers a pertinent remark by way of refutation [Sexual Politics, 1971, p. 187, which is worth recording here:
Confronted with so much concrete evidence of the male’s superior status, sensing on all sides the depreciation in which they are held, girls envy not the penis, but only what the penis gives one social pretensions to. Freud appears to have made a major and rather foolish confusion between biology and culture, anatomy and status. It is still more apparent that his audience found such confusion serviceable.

Convinced that the connection between the penis and intellectual life is unquestionably organic, Freud maintains that the intellectual superiority of the male, constitutionally linked with the penis is close to an ascertainable fact for Freud a rock bottom of remarkable comfort. Freud believed that two aspects of woman’s character are directly linked to penis envy; modesty and jealousy. It is her self-despair over the defect of her castration, which gives rise to the well-known shame of women. Freud designated shame as a feminine characteristic, par excellence. Its purpose, in his view, is simply to conceal her hapless defect.

As among the primitives, so today, the woman hides her parts to hide her wound. When Freud suggests that modesty in women was originally designed for concealment of genital deficiency, he is willing to describe pubic hair as the response of nature herself to cover the female fault. As such in all these respects in the psychic field of a woman the biological factor is really the rock bottom.

It ought to be stressed that Freud’s doctrine of penis envy is in fact a superbly timed accusation, enabling masculine sentiment to take the offensive. The whole weight of responsibility and even of guilt is now placed upon any woman unwilling to stay in her place. The theory of penis envy shifts the blame of her suffering to the
female for daring to aspire to a biologically impossible state. Any hankering for a less humiliating and circumscribed existence is immediately ascribed to unnatural and unrealistic deviation from her genetic identity and therefore her fate.

A woman, who resists femininity, feminine temperament, status, and role, is thought to court neurosis, for femininity is her fate as anatomy is destiny. In so evading the only identity nature has granted her, she counts nothingness. Freud defined the libido as masculine regularly and lawfully of a masculine nature whether in the man or the woman. He argued that culture was inimical to sexuality. His argument was that if one were to devote oneself to higher pursuits, one must renounce, or at any rate, sublimate sexuality.

Since by Freud’s definition, women have very low libido, they cannot pursue civilization. The male, whose higher libido equips him for reaching higher reaches, must shun the temptations afforded by the female and go on to loftier goals. Freud entrusted not only human culture but the preservation of the human race to the male. His argument runs thus [“Psychology of Women,” 1993, p. 131]:

Nature has paid less careful attention to the demands of female function than to those of masculinity . . . the achievement of the biological aim is entrusted to the aggressiveness of the male, and is to some extent independent of the cooperation of the female. . . .

The point that is made here is that the whole balance of male sexual aggression toward the female is hereby subsumed under a huge abstract force only concerned with the continuation of the species. This attitude gave rise to a whole
battery of military diction which psychology has ever since employed to describe sexuality as surrender, dominance, and mastery. Once again it is useful to quote Freud [“Psychology of Women,” 194, p. 131] is worth quoting here:

The male pursues the female for the purpose of sexual union, seizes hold her and penetrates into her . . . by this you have precisely reduced the characteristic of masculinity to the factor of aggressiveness. . . .

The three most distinguishing traits of female personality were, in Freud’s view, passivity, masochism, and narcissism. Even here, one can see a certain merit in the Freudian paradigm taken as pure description. The position of women in patriarchy is such that they are expected to be passive, to suffer, and to be sexual objects. In fact the women are socialized into such roles. Freud, therefore, proceeded to define feminine as constitutional passivity, masochism, and narcissism. He also prescribed it as the norm not only of general development but also of healthy development. It is further argued that passivity and masochism are interrelated. Masochism is female; femininity is masochistic. In this context, it ought to be noted that the lust for pain is an expression of femininity, a concept, which can be supported on biological and constitutional grounds. Furthermore, it can be argued that this pain is the nature of a female sexual experience.

Sexual excitation arises as an accessory effect of a large series of internal processes as soon as the intensity of these processes has exceeded certain quantitative limits . . . an excitation of physical pain and feelings would surely have this effect. And narcissistic men improve upon their love object; narcissistic women persist in an inferior form of affection, not rising to the altruism of object love.
Narcissism is not only constitutionally female, but it is also produced by penis envy. The effect of penis envy has a share, furthermore, in the physical vanity of women, since they are bound to value their charms more highly in a late compensation for their original sexual inferiority. Even woman’s beauty is but another symptom of the need to be born with a penis. It is in this context Maya Angelou lifts her banner of opposition. She is not prepared to accept all the Freudian concepts concerning feminine passivity, feminine masochism, and feminine narcissism,

Maya Angelou does not accept Freud’s argument that limits female life to one of sexual reproduction. She argues that women should evolve out of the low cultural level earmarked for them by the male dominated society.

Maya Angelou does not allow much credit to the argument that identifies masculinity with force, cruelty, indifference, egotism, and property, and femininity with passivity, masochism, and narcissism.

Maya Angelou that coitus can scarcely be said to take place in a vacuum. Coitus is a biological and physical activity. It is set so deeply within the larger context of human affairs that it serves as a charged microcosm of the variety of attitudes and values in which culture subscribes.

Maya Angelou is fully conscious of the biological trap in which women are caught, but she argues that it is not the end of life. A sensible woman emerges fully empowered notwithstanding her biological entrapment. The awareness of the female body condition of Maya Angelou is acute and sharp. Her contention is that
psychological, biological, social and economic factors are intertwined with sexism and violence on women.

Maya Angelou is conscious of the denials, deprivations, the stresses and strains - - Sturm-und-Drang - - the tensions and anxieties - - Angst - - the pains and miseries, sufferings and struggles, mental conflicts, exploitation and dehumanization passed through by the women. Understandably then, Maya Angelou employs the art of writing as the effective medium to voice her protest against the injustices perpetrated by the male chauvinists, and wants an end to the male domination under the guise of the predominant male patriarchy.

The pervasiveness of sexual asymmetry leads to dependence complex, inferiority complex, fear psychosis, and subordination. The male turns the oppressor and the female remains the oppressed, and the suffering self. Child bearing, child rearing, motherhood, household chores, and domestic orientation relegate the women to domestic sphere completely. She is forced to the domestic front.

Rosaldo makes an interesting remark, which is worth quoting here [Rosaldo Quoted in Louis Lamphere, “Feminism and Anthropology: The Struggle to Reshape Our Thinking About Gender,” in Christie Farnham, The Impact of Research in the Academy, 1987, p. 12].

Put quite simply, men have no single commitment as enduring, time consuming, and emotionally compelling - - as close to seeming necessary and natural - - as the relation of women to her infant child, and so men are free to form those broader associations that we call
“society,” universalistic systems of order, meaning and commitment that link particular mother-child groups. . . . Women thus are involved in the messiness of daily life; they are always available for interruption by children. Men can be more distant and may actually have separate quarters away from women’s activities. Men can thus achieve authority and create rank, hierarchy, and a political world away from women. The confinement of women to a domestic sphere and men’s ability to create and dominate the political sphere thus accounts for men’s ability to hold the greater share of power and authority in all known cultures and societies. . . .

The pointed observation Shulamith Firestone is worth mentioning here for it throws much light of the oppressive culture propagated and practiced by the dominant male, and it reads thus [Shulamith Firestone, Quoted in Gineete Castro, American Feminism: A Contemporary History, 1990, p. 38]:

. . . matriarchy exists only in psychology. It is the mentality of primitive man, who having experienced his physical force but still ignorant of his fecundating power, yields a fraction of his existence to woman, since she alone seems to him to participate in the mystery of life. In this view, matriarchy was never a factual creation of women, but only a perspective to lighten the oppression of society, in which the veneration of the female principle was already the bearer of the seeds of alienation, since it was born of the will of man. . . .
In fact, it is difficult minimize the problems experienced by women attempting to live out the revolutionary theory propounded by the radical feminist thinkers.

_The first problem is the gap between women's new identity and the constraints imposed on them by a society that remain sexist._

_The second problem is that oppression of women cuts across the lines of all economic classes, while women's relationships with their male oppressors are called blood kinship or emotional ties, and lived in mutual complicity._

_This relationship of complicity explains how women could allow themselves to be deceived in the drama of power conflicts, so strong in their illusion of sharing or at least influencing power._

In this context, incidentally, the pointed observation of Gineete Castro is worth mentioning here for it throws much light of the oppressive culture propagated and practiced by the dominant male, and it reads thus [Gineete Castro, _American Feminism: A Contemporary History_, 1990, p. 24]:

Consciousness-raising has continued because of the perpetual nature of the issues involved, and analysis of these issues has gradually become much more profound. The first of these is the _socioeconomic oppression of women_, perceived at first as an injustice solely from an economic viewpoint, subsequently as psychological alienation through the socioeconomic determinism of motherhood, and finally as sexual discrimination exercised against the entire socioeconomic lass of women [Italics as in the Original]. . . .
The next problem is the cultural oppression of women. Betty Friedan argues that the cultural ruination and social death arise out of the traditional role of the housewife as devised by the male. The *Housewife’s Syndrome* results in the identity crisis of the woman and calls for a healthy quest for a distinct female identity. It is against such a background study one examines critically how Maya Angelou deals with the Freudian concept of anatomy is destiny. She explode the myth concerning the biological trap and argues that a woman could be a mother and a career woman and strike upward mobility in life by shedding her dependence on men and her yielding and subordinate nature. But of course she breaks loose of the shackles of male domination only after bitter experiences at the hands of men in her life. Her first and the most painful experience was with her mother’s friend Mr. Freeman.

In her father’s absence, Maya Angelou finds substitute father figures, men like Mr. Freeman, who will give her the attention her father cannot, or she makes fun of men so they become undesirable to her. She enjoys joking with Bailey about pompous fatherly types like Reverend Thomas, who visits Annie Henderson to take advantage of her home cooking. Uncle Willie, her father’s blood brother is a substitute father in the strictest sense.

At one time, Maya Angelou, feeling sorry for her uncle’s disability, comments that if he wishes, she would be his make-believe daughter. She admits that Uncle Willie would have been a better father than Bailey, Sr. But his speech problems and her insecurity prevent a good relationship from developing between them.
The most important father substitute is Mr. Freeman, a man who sits up and waits until Vivian comes home from dealing poker in gambling parlours. When Maya Angelou has nightmares, the three of them sleep together.

One morning after Vivian gets up, Mr. Freeman touches Maya Angelou and pulls her on top of him, his right hand moving rapidly. Maya Angelou feels “at home” and imagines that he is her “real father” whom she has finally found [I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, p. 61]. While not a member of the family Vivian’s-live-in boyfriend has a husband’s place in Vivian’s sex life and a stepfather’s role with regard to Vivian’s daughter, a trust that he violates in both cases. Mary Jane Lupton makes a pointed observation, in this context, and it is worth quoting here [Maya Angelou: A Critical Companion, 1998, p. 5]:

When Maya was eight, her father took her and bailey from Stamps to St. Louis to visit their mother, Vivian Baxter. It was there in 1936, in a poorly supervised household, that Maya was seduced and raped by her mother’s boyfriends, Mr. Freeman. After a brief trial Freeman was beaten to death, presumably be Maya’s three uncles. Horrified that her words had caused anyone’s death, Maya withdrew into a silence that the Baxters were incapable of handling. She and Bailey were returned to Annie Henderson and the community of Stamps, where for five years May remained mute. She was finally released from the burden of speechlessness in 1940, through her study of literature and guidance by a woman from Stamps named Mrs. Flowers. . .
For like a song less bird, Maya Angelou gives up all singing, all sound, during the five years that follow her rape. For five years she is mute, locked a speechless body, as she has willed it. She is liberated from her caged silence only after Mrs. Flowers helps her release her voice. Listening to Mrs. Flowers read aloud, Maya Angelou describes the woman’s voice as singing: “Her [Maya Angelou’s] voice slid in and curved down through and over the words. She was nearly singing” [I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, p. 61].

Maya Angelou compares her painful and bitter experience when Mr. Freeman raped her in a graphic manner to a corn and chicken. Maya Angelou compares his thing [Mr. Freeman’s penis] to a “brown corn of ear” [I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, p. 61]. It feels pulpy like the “inside of a freshly killed chicken [I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, p. 61]. In both instances she compares what she is unsure of, the penis, to objects familiar to her rural upbringing - - to corn and to chicken - - as if trying to make the strangeness go away and the experience along with it.

Mary Jane Lupton makes a pointed observation, in this context, and it is worth quoting here [Maya Angelou: A Critical Companion, 1998, p. 67]:

A cage, as Georgia Douglas Johnson warns us, restrains not only the Black body but also the female Black body; a Black woman is doubly threatened because of her race and her gender. The third theme, rape, is a concept so forceful that it overwhelms the autobiography, even though it is presented fairly briefly in the text. The theme involves two sexual experiences with Mr.Freeman. Both scenes are couched in metaphors, allowing her to describe her pain without having to directly
speak/write about what she feels. Unable to comprehend the reality of her situation, she invents comparisons that sound like dirty jokes because they really are dirty jokes, played by a frustrated father substitute on an innocent girl. . . .

The rape of Maya Angelou is a bitter experience for her. This highlights the fact that the female’s body is an object of pleasure and that men crave to exploit the female and keep her under subjugation through sexuality.

Once again, Mary Jane Lupton makes a pointed observation, in this context, and it is worth quoting here [Maya Angelou: A Critical Companion, 1998, p. 56]:

Angelou’s recounting of the rape and its aftermath is brilliantly done. One might contrast Maya’s rape to John Grisham’s depiction of child molestation and rape in A Time to Kill [1992]. Grisham’s fictional account, though, for its graphic detail, is told from the perspective of a White male lawyer and not, as in Caged Bird, from the personal experience of a Black female child. Grisham the novelist is removed from the event while Angelou the biographer is painfully present. . . . The rape scene, so powerful in its physical and emotional impact, contains narrative elements that are magnified to the extent that the reader might think of the rape as the essence of plot. Maya’s stained panties, Mr. Freeman’s “cold face and empty eyes” [I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, p. 67], Maya’s outburst in court - - each of these details is loaded with action. Ironically, for Maya, the rape is the ultimate learning experience. Through her pain she becomes aware of
being a small girl in a world controlled by men. The violation to her undeveloped body and the guilt she feels when her uncles evidently kick Mr. Freeman to death create a negative chain of events followed by five years of silence as Maya refuses to speak. She is finally restored to language by her close relationship with Mrs. Bertha Flowers, a learned friend of her grandmother’s, who liberates Maya from her wordless cavern.

Maya Angelou realizes that women are victims in a patriarchal society, in which power is held by the father or by his male representatives in the community and in which men make all the important decisions. She also appreciates the fact the Black women are more self-reliant than the White women. She wants women characters to bond with other women in an effort to change conditions under the patriarchy. Although Maya Angelou is to some degree a negative character, she is a potential feminist because she is aware of the patriarchal forces in society that are working against her.

The violation, which began in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* takes on a much sharper focus in *Gather Together in My Name*. To be sure, the author is still concerned with the question of what it means to be Black and female in America, but her development is reflective of a particular type of Black woman at a specific moment in history and subjected to certain social forces, which assault the black woman with unusual intensity.

Maya Angelou and her close friend Rosa guy, both representatives of the Cultural Association of Women of African Heritage, decide to call on Malcolm X to
ask for his help in controlling a potential riot situation brought about by their United Nations demonstration to protest the death of Lumumba.

The following dialogue demonstrates her talent for remembering and recording their conversation as precisely as possible [Quoted in Carol Neubauer, “The Displacement and Autobiographical Style in Maya Angelou’s The Heart of a Woman,” in Black American Literature Forum, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Fall, 1983), p. 125]:

I joined the telling, and we distributed our story equally, like the patter of a long-time vaudeville duo.

“We - - CAWAH . . .”
“Cultural Association of Women of African Heritage.”
“Wanted to protest the murder of Lumumba as we - -”
“Planned a small demonstration. We didn’t expect - -”
“More than fifty people - -”

“And thousands came.”
“That told us that the people of Harlem are angry and that they are more for Africa and Africans”
“than they ever let on . . .”

Maya Angelou suffers fragmentation because of her relationships with men, and thus suffers being exploited by men. In this connection, Priscilla R. Ramsey argues to the point and it is worth quoting here [“Transcendence: The Poetry of Maya Angelou.” A Current Bibliography on African Affairs, 17 (1985-1985), p. 149]:

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Angelou often misinterprets the behaviour of men with whom she is infatuated. Because she becomes involved too quickly, she is repeatedly hurt by men who are far more experienced than she, who are far more able to see her neediness and exploit it before she is able to see it in herself. . . .

Maya Angelou meets Curly, who gives her first “love party” [Gather Together in My Name, p. 18]. Overjoyed with the lovemaking, Maya Angelou senses maturity and pleasure for the first time. Then one he [Curly] tells her that his girlfriend has come back from San Diego where she had been working in a shipyard. Till the return of his woman, Curly has exploited the female body of Maya Angelou an thus gets jilted.

In her distress over losing Curly, Maya Angelou turns to her brother, Bailey, who is again her defender, as he had been in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Bailey works for decent pay on an ammunition boat out of San Diego. Promising her two hundred dollars, he persuades her to leave San Francisco and make a new start in San Diego.

Meanwhile, Bailey marries a high school chum named Eunice who, much to his despair, contracts tuberculosis and dies. Fragmented and incomplete after her death, Bailey has a breakdown, the turns to drugs to ease the emptiness. Of all the men who take advantage of Maya Angelou, L. D. Tolbrook is the worst. A married man, he lures Maya Angelou into becoming a prostitute for his sake. Professing that he owes money to some hardened criminals, Tolbrook convinces the “innocent” Maya Angelou to turn tricks.
Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the whorehouse scenes is the dialogue. Maya Angelou’s co-workers are intelligent women who know the trade. Clara, Maya Angelou’s boss, advises further on how to talk and act when she is with a man. Clara promises that if she is good, L. D. [Daddy] will get her a “little white girl,” meaning cocaine [Gather Together in My Name, p. 21], Maya Angelou is beginning to suspect, from the way the whores talk, that Daddy is really a pimp, someone who is earning a living, he is furious.

Once again Maya Angelou’s saviour, Bailey forces her to quit the whorehouse and orders to warn Tolbrook that her brother Bailey is after him. The way that Maya Angelou gets lured into prostitution and drug addiction go to prove that men, in the male dominated world, exploit Black women in a dependent poor state.

In the end, Maya Angelou extricates from the clutches of men who try to rule her and exploit her. In this context, Mary Jane Lupton makes a pointed observation, in this context, and it is worth quoting here [Maya Angelou: A Critical Companion, 1998, p. 85]:

The climax of Gather Together in My Name occurs when an unexpectedly compassionate boyfriend, Troubador Martin, takes Maya, now smoking a lot of marijuana, on an unnerving tour of the underworld of heroin addiction. Troub makes her watch while he shoots up, makes her watch as the needle punctures a scab and “rich yellow pus” runs down [Gather Together in My Name, p. 180].
Maya’s refusal, at Troub’s advice, to do hard drugs marks the end of her irresponsibility and the inauguration of new standards that help safeguard her and her son’s survival. . . .

With determination Maya Angelou decides to remake her life by shedding her dependence on men and her inferiority complex. She decides to remake her life. In fact her will powers to lead the life of a single mother and strike upward mobility in life by pursuing a career mark Maya Angelou as the empowered woman. Her determination to shake off the shackles imposed on her by men surfaces in the following passage [Gather Together in My Name, p. 187]:

I had no idea what I was going to make of my life, but I had given a promise and found my innocence. I swore I’d never lose it again [My Emphasis]. . . .

In Gather Together in My Name, Maya Angelou emerges into the world of work, carefully recounting her pursuit of economic stability as she moves from job to job - - from Creole cook, to dancer, to prostitute, to fry cook. During the course of the autobiography she sometimes acts irresponsibly, when she endangers the safety of her son who is kidnapped by a baby-sitter.

Maya Angelou also exposes herself to a number of risky relationships with men; a dancer, a married man who sells stolen clothes; a vein-scared drug user. At the end of Gather Together in My Name, she is finally saved when her most reliable friend, Troubador Martin, demonstrates the dangers of drug addiction by walking her through a heroin den. In this context, Mary Jane Lupton makes a pointed observation,
in this context, and it is worth quoting here [Maya Angelou: A Critical Companion, 1998, p. 85] :

At seventeen, Maya is looking for a job that will bring her recognition, money, and dependence, but she lacks the skills necessary to achieve those goals in a dominant White economy. Additionally, she believes, as do many young women, that to achieve her own goals she must leave her mother and stepfather, who have supported her, and define a new life for herself and her two month old son. Leaving her family thus creates a double bind for the struggling single mother; she depends on them, but at the same time she wants to be independent. . . .

Maya Angelou points out that in the slave past the Black women were subjected to sufferings mainly because they were women. But in spite of being caught in the biological trap and yielding to the argument that anatomy is destiny there were some women who fought against the devastating odds because of gender discrimination and because of circumstances. Her first story narrates the history of Harriet Tubman, a model of a strong Black woman at the heart of American history, a woman who fought against devastating odds and suffered extraordinary personal sacrifice to free many of her people. Harriet Tubman is, therefore, an appropriate figure to celebrate in an international group of Black women.

Harriet Tubman, Maya Angelou points out that Harriet Tubman worked for the freedom of other Blacks though she had to battle against gender discrimination and great odds because of being born a female and that too a Black woman and argues thus [The Heart of a Woman, p. 129]:
Harriet Tubman stood on free ground, above a free sky, hundreds of miles from the chains and lashes of slavery and said “I must go back. With the help of God I will bring others to freedom.’ . . .

Although suffering from a slaver’s blow, she walked back and forth through the lands of bondage time after time and brought hundreds of her people to freedom. Thus Maya Angelou presents the inspiring story of Harriet Tubman.

Then Maya Angelou passes to deal with the dramatic presentation of the heroism of Sojourner Truth. Like Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth is a fearless Black woman. She is a fitting example of the essential strength of Black American women to share with a group of African women celebrating the same heroic characteristics in their ancestors. The anecdote relates an equal rights meeting in the 1800s at which Sojourner truth addressed the group and was accused by a White man of being a man dressed as a woman. The passage makes interesting reading and it is worth quoting here [The Heart of a Woman, p. 132]:

“Ain’t I a woman? I have suckled your babes at this breast.”

Here she put her large hands on her bodice. Grabbing the clothing she pulled. The threads gave way, the blouse and her undergarments parted and her huge tits hung, pendulously free. She continued, her face unchanging and her voice never faltering, “And ain’t I a woman?”

When I finished the story, my hands tugging at the button of my blouse, the African women stood applauding, stamping their feet, and
crying. Proud of their sister whom they had not known a hundred years before. . . .

Like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, Maya Angelou wants all African American women not to be cowed down. They must assert and be bold like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. Like them, the African American women should shed their inferiority complex and pooh-pooh the argument that anatomy is destiny and fight against the odds caused gender discrimination. In fact the argument that their anatomy is their destiny is a convenient ploy employed by the patriarchal men to keep the women in a state of subjugation. They must disprove the argument that their anatomy is their destiny and in fact convert it into a motivating argument for them to get empowered and strike upward mobility and enjoy economic independence.